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STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EFTA STATES

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SUBCOMMITTEE II ON THE FREE MOVEMENT OF CAPITAL AND SERVICES

EEA EFTA Comment on the EU Freight Transport Agenda

- *Boosting the efficiency, integration and sustainability of freight transport in Europe (COM(2007) 606);*
- *Freight Transport Logistics Action Plan (COM(2007) 607);*
- *Towards a rail network giving priority to freight (COM 2007/608);*
- *Commission Communication on a European Ports policy (COM(2007) 616);*
- *Consultation Motorways of the Sea (SEC(2007) 1367);*
- *Consultation on a maritime transport space without barriers reinforcing the internal market for intra-European maritime transport (SEC(2007) 1351).*

I Executive summary

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's initiatives of boosting the efficiency, integration and sustainability of freight transport in Europe, including the objectives of promoting seamless freight logistics, making rail freight more competitive, creating a better framework for the modernisation of ports, reducing administrative burdens in Short Sea Shipping, and stimulating further progress in developing Motorways of the Sea. The EEA EFTA States will actively participate to foster good solutions.

The integrated approach and core orientations should be reflected in specific policymaking for all transport modes. In order to ensure improved sustainability and a level playing field, all modes should meet common principles of fair and efficient transport infrastructure charging.

The EEA EFTA States consider that logistics can be a prime driver to facilitate better integration of transport modes in co-modality, including where appropriate, the achievement of shifts to more environmentally friendly modes. The EEA EFTA States follow with interest the ongoing examination of current legislation on vehicle

weights and dimensions in view of foreseen growth in freight transport and changed transport requirements.

The EEA EFTA States support giving increased priority to freight by rail. On a short term basis, efforts should be concentrated on capacity and reliability improving measures on existing – mostly single track - lines. In a longer perspective the economic viability of establishing dedicated freight corridors should be studied, including an extension of a dedicated rail freight network to include Norway.

Since the ports of Europe are of different size and facing different challenges we support the idea of creating a framework for attracting investments while respecting the environment, and to focus on the principle of subsidiarity.

The EEA EFTA States regard Motorways of the Sea (MoS) as an important part of a concerted effort to absorb a significant part of the expected increase in international road freight traffic. We underline the importance of efficient port facilities and hinterland connections. The EEA EFTA States consider that all Norwegian TEN A-ports, can participate in MoS projects.

The EEA EFTA States strongly support the need to put Short Sea Shipping on an equal footing with land transport when it comes to implementation of the internal market and reduce administrative burdens correspondingly. Any such measures should be flag neutral. We welcome policy initiatives that would further promote short sea shipping with a focus on intermodality. The exercise of identifying bottlenecks in door-to-door shipping should continue, and the EEA EFTA states would like to contribute in a similar way to the ongoing process of identifying specific bottlenecks in freight logistics.

II Introduction

Freight transport, a rapidly expanding economic sector, is essential to maintain economic growth and competitiveness and is crucial for the well-functioning of the EU and the wider EEA Internal Market. Long transport distances to main European markets put efficient freight logistics at the forefront for EEA EFTA States.

The EEA EFTA States note that the continuous growth in freight transport, forecasted to grow by a further 50% up to 2020, puts a strain on transport infrastructures; visible signs of this are increased congestion on parts of the transport system and increased carbon emissions. This trend needs to be stopped.

The EEA EFTA States consider that both Governments and industry must address the major challenge on how to organize the goods flows in a more efficient and above all a more sustainable manner.

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's initiatives of boosting the efficiency, integration and sustainability of freight transport in Europe, including the objectives of promoting seamless freight logistics, making rail freight more competitive, creating a better framework for the modernisation of ports, reducing administrative burdens in Short Sea Shipping, and stimulating further progress in developing Motorways of the Sea. Improvement of the efficiency of freight transport is to the heart of the environment, the industry and to society in general.

We emphasise that the development of freight transport and logistics is primarily a matter for the industry, but authorities have an important role to play in creating positive framework conditions for efficiency, sustainability and growth.

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's integrated approach to freight transport based on co-modality, innovation, simplification, quality and greening of main transport corridors. These orientations should be reflected in specific policymaking for all transport modes.

The EEA EFTA States support the aim of shifting freight to more environmentally friendly modes of transport where appropriate. We agree with the Commission's basic approach of co-modality making it possible to enhance the efficiency of all transport modes and their combination. In order to ensure improved sustainability and a level playing field, all modes of transport should meet common principles of fair and efficient transport infrastructure charging. We underline that efficient transport modes are a prerequisite for sustainable transport. The EEA EFTA States look forward to the results of the assessment of a common methodology for internalisation of external costs of different transport modes.

The enlargement of the European Union has accentuated differences between peripheral and sparsely populated areas on the one hand and centrally and heavily urbanised areas on the other. It is the opinion of the EEA EFTA States that EU internal market legislation and other policy instruments should to a larger extent reflect such regional differences. Having regard to the fact that in parts of Europe, such as Iceland and the northern parts of Norway, the choice of transport modes are limited, it is of fundamental importance that actions and legislation at EU level do not contribute to reduced competitiveness of industries in peripheral and remote areas, when there are no valid alternatives.

III Freight transport Logistics Action Plan

The EEA EFTA States consider that logistics can be a prime driver to facilitate better integration of transport modes in co-modality, including where appropriate, the achievement of shifts to more environmentally friendly modes.

We consider that the efficiency of intermodal hubs, such as intermodal terminals, ports and rail-freight terminals, is essential for efficient logistics and multimodality, and recognises that open and non-discriminatory access to terminals should be ensured. In addition to encouraging private sector players to make use of advanced informatics and

handling technologies, the EEA EFTA States underline the need for authorities both on a national and EU-level to engage in cross-sectoral infrastructure improvements and hinterland connections.

The EEA EFTA States follow with interest the ongoing evaluation of existing legislation on vehicle weights and dimensions in view of foreseen growth in freight transport, technological developments and changed transport requirements. Such an evaluation must address infrastructure constraints, safety and environmental conditions.

IV Rail network giving priority to freight

The EEA EFTA States support giving increased priority to freight by rail, and will actively participate to foster efficient and sustainable solutions for cross-border rail freight transport in Europe. It is important that Europe is integrated regarding technical interoperability and common safety rules. For the EEA EFTA States, it is important to be involved in matters related to the challenge of delays, quality and reliability of the European rail network.

As members of the Internal Market, the EEA EFTA States are connected with the large and rapidly growing European freight market. In this perspective, the environment plays an important role as well as the challenges that the increased road traffic creates for the infrastructure and the emissions of CO₂. The environmental benefit of increasing rail freight transport should also be taken into account when planning the new corridors and network for the railways.

In Iceland there are neither railways nor railways services. Nevertheless, Iceland enjoys the services of railways along the transport chain, as much from imports and exports from and to mainland Europe.

In Norway, the railways share of the total freight market has increased significantly since 2000, and the European market is important for further growth. With a view to increase the European rail freight's share of the total freight market, the EEA EFTA members strongly support the further work making rail freight more attractive.

Today, a large part of the rail network consists of single track lines for passenger and goods transport. Many of the lines have a shortage of capacity and high needs for upgrading. On a short term basis, it is the view of the EEA EFTA States that efforts should be concentrated on capacity and reliability improving measures on existing lines. In a longer perspective, the EEA EFTA States find it interesting to analyse the economic viability of establishing dedicated corridors for rail freight only. It is the view of the EEA EFTA States that it would be to the benefit of European rail freight if a future dedicated rail-network was extended to include Norway.

V European Ports Policy

The EEA EFTA States welcome the Communication on a European Ports Policy. We support the objectives of creating a framework which will allow European ports to attract investments for their modernisation while respecting the environment. Ports are key points of modal transfer and are vital in the development of freight logistics, Short Sea Shipping and Motorways of the Sea. The quality and efficiency of port services, infrastructure and hinterland connections are essential for the smooth and effective operations of logistic transport chains using maritime transport. The EEA EFTA States believe it is important to bring awareness to the ports' vital role in the total European transport and logistics network.

We support the Commission's initiative to increase efficiency and productivity in ports and to attract investment, simplifying administrative procedures and guaranteeing fair competition between ports while taking environmental concerns into consideration. In view of rapidly increasing administrative tasks in a broader sense, e.g. security and pollution prevention, efforts should especially be taken to ensure the competitiveness of smaller ports.

It should be emphasised that there is a variety of challenges facing European ports. Large ports experience problems related to congestion, while smaller ports on the fringe of Europe put their efforts to concentrate on a sufficient amount of cargo to make maritime transport a more competitive alternative to trucking. Since the ports of Europe are of different sizes and facing different challenges we support the idea of developing guidelines, not directives, and to focus on the principle of subsidiary.

VI Motorways of the Sea

The EEA EFTA States believe that Motorways of the Sea (MoS) are needed as part of a concerted effort to absorb a significant part of the expected increase in road freight traffic, improve the accessibility of peripheral regions and reduce road congestion. We regard the consultation process as an important measure to stimulate further progress in developing Motorways of the Sea.

The EEA EFTA States welcome the efforts made to promote Motorways of the Sea as an attractive alternative to road transport and we agree with the Commission that Motorways of the Sea only will succeed if the quality and competitiveness of the services is comparable with alternatives offered by other modes.

It is of great importance to focus both on port facilities and hinterland connections. Without good connections to other transport modes, it will be difficult to shift transport from the road to the sea.

To succeed, it will be important to promote various projects and at the same time make it easier to apply for funding. We therefore welcome the suggestion for a one-stop help desk that could provide information on all the relevant sources of financing.

It is the understanding of the EEA EFTA States that Norwegian TEN A ports, within the framework of TEN-T, may participate in MoS projects.

VII Maritime transport without barriers

The success of Motorways of the Sea and Short Sea Shipping are intrinsically linked to procedural harmonisation and simplification. The EEA EFTA States therefore agree that it is necessary to simplify procedures to reduce significantly the administrative burden on Short Sea Shipping, as highlighted in the Commission Consultation document on the European maritime transport space without barriers. We strongly support the need to put Short Sea Shipping on an equal footing with land transport when it comes to the implementation of the internal market and reduce administrative burdens correspondingly. Any such measures should be flag neutral.

Maritime shipping in itself is only to a small degree a door-to-door concept, and is therefore dependent on efficient transfer facilities to other modes of transport such as road and rail. Developing actions at EU level must take duly into account the efficient integration of the EEA EFTA States. Measures at EU level where the EEA EFTA States participate actively are for example the promotion of Short Sea Shipping centres, the Marco Polo Programme, and the Motorways of the Sea Programme. An efficient European short sea shipping fleet is essential if short sea shipping is to be a key element of an intermodal transport service. The EEA EFTA States therefore support environmental projects in the maritime industry and the development of the short sea shipping fleet.

The common rules that apply in Europe for safety, security and environmental protection are not only regional rules; they are based on international rules. Shipping is global in nature and should have international rules. On this basis, the EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's initiative to gather necessary data from relevant stakeholders with the aim of simplifying existing administrative procedures in shipping in order to reinforce efficiency and competitiveness.

We welcome policy initiatives that would further promote Short Sea Shipping with a focus on intermodality. The exercise of identifying bottlenecks in door-to-door shipping should continue, and the EEA EFTA states would like to contribute in a similar way in the ongoing process of identifying specific bottlenecks in freight logistics.

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